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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 MCT-01 /070 W
----------020734Z 010008 /13
R 011444Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2498
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2146

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT SY
SUBJ: REGIME ACTS TO CONTAIN POTENTIAL DRUZE UNREST ARISING
FROM JUMBLATT'S ASSASSINATION

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 1984, (B) DAMASCUS 1964

1. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT WHILE SARG REMAINS SENSITIVE TO POTENTIAL SECURITY PROBLEMS POSED BY DRUZE REACTIONS TO JUMBLATT'S DEATH, IT NOT LIKELY THAT ANY LARGE-SCALE ORGANIZED ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY WILL OCCUR.

2. U.K. EMBOFF WHO HAD HEARD RUMORS ABOUT SECURITY PROBLEMS IN JEBEL DRUZE AREA EVEN BEFORE JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION, RECENTLY VISITED AREA INCLUDING MAJOR MARKET TOWN OF SUWAYDA. HE FAILED TO FIND ANY EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER THAT ORGANIZED ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY OCCURRING AS RESULT OUTSIDE AGITATORS OR JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION. HE CONFIRMED PREVIOUS REPORTS
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THAT MANY DRUZE SUSPECT SYRIAN ROLE BUT OPINED IN ABSENCE OF ANY HARD EVIDENCE OF SYRIAN COMPLICITY THEY ARE NOT LIKELY TO ACT UPON THEIR SUSPICIONS. SEVERAL PRELATES WHO IN CONTACT WITH SYRIAN SECURITY OFFICIALS AND DRUZE CLAIMED THAT SARG HAD DISPATCHED HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIAL TO SHEIK AL-AQL, ONE OF LEADING SYRIAN DRUZE SHEIKS, TO REASSURE HIM THAT SYRIA HAD NO ROLE IN CRIME AND TO REQUEST HIS SUPPORT

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IN CALMING HIS PEOPLE.

3. EMBOFF WHO HAD CLOSE CONTACT WITH SEVERAL MIDDLE-LEVEL DRUZE ARMY OFFICERS FOUND THEY NOT PREPARED TO CREDIT RUMORS, AND THEY EVIDENCED NO REAL ANGER AGAINST REGIME. HE WAS TOLD, HOWEVER, BY DRUZE CIVILIAN WHO WAS EYEWITNESS THAT SEVEN-DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE WAS HELD IN LARGE VILLAGE OF JABEL DRUZE AREA ATTENDED BY THOUSANDS OF DRUZE. SARG OFFICIALS INITIALLY HAD REQUESTED DRUZE LEADERS NOT TO HOLD SERVICE BUT RELENTED WHEN THEY FOUND DRUZE DETERMINED. REGULAR EMBASSY SOURCE REPORTED THAT DEFENSE COMPANIES OF RIF-AT AL-ASAD BASED IN DAMASCUS CONTINUE ON ALERT STATUS DECLARED AT TIME OF JUMBLATT'S MURDER. SOURCE SPEC-ULATED THAT TROOPS MAY WELL REMAIN ON ALERT UNTIL AFTER FORTY DAY MOURNING PERIOD HAS PASSED. DRUZE LEADERS HAVE ALREADY INDICATED TO AUTHORITIES DESIRE TO HOLD FORTY DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE BUT SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE NOT APPROVED IT AND HOPE TO DISCOURAGE THEM.

4. COMMENT: SARG SEEMS TO HAVE COME THROUGH AFTERMATH OF JUMBLATT ASSASSINATION WITH LITTLE OR NO DOMESTIC DAMAGE OTHER THAN LINGERING DOUBTS AMONG MANY DRUZE AND OTHERS OF SYRIA'S ROLE. BARRING REVELATION CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT IMPLICATES SYRIA OR UNNECESSARILY HEAVY-HANDED TACTICS BY SECURITY OFFICIALS IN JEBEL DRUZE DISTRICT, WE ANTICIPATE NO MAJOR SECURITY PROBLEMS WILL RESULT.
MURPHY

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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